




Emotional intelligence at the workplace: Why is it crucial for employees?

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ABSTRACT

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In the human capital development process, employees' behavioral issues have been discussed with high priority because of the urge to adjust to the job environment and adapt to the change management process. Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to understand and manage one's own as well as other people's emotions effectively. The qualities associated with EI, such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, are considered key factors in handling social situations and achieving success in both personal and professional life. EI has emerged as a crucial competency in today's competitive business world to achieve organizational success. This study attempts to determine the impact of emotional intelligence in organizational workplace settings. It aims to explore how emotional intelligence positively influences employees' job satisfaction, boosts job performance, and overall productivity through social relationships. This study adopts a literature review approach. It is descriptive in nature. Current literature on emotional intelligence has been analyzed to perceive the study's objectives. This study finds a highly positive relationship between EI and job satisfaction. Moreover, employees with high EI show higher job performance and increased productivity. Theoretically, this study will contribute to the literature on human capital development, focusing on EI, and incorporating it into organizational frameworks. Practically, this study will contribute to human capital development practice, revealing the current demand to adopt EI in the workplace.

Contribution/Originality: This study presents a focused viewpoint, revealing how emotional intelligence competencies are valued to increase employee job satisfaction, job performance, and overall productivity, whereas a large portion of the previous literature approaches workplace emotional intelligence in a generalized manner.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human psychology is mysterious and complicated to explain. A person's behavior is driven by their emotions, which substantially influence human cognitive processes, including perception, attention, learning, memory, reasoning, and problem-solving (Tyng, Amin, Saad, & Malik, 2017). Sometimes, an individual's behavior is also motivated by their surrounding people (Shashkevich, 2019). This nature of human beings makes them unpredictable and vulnerable in critical situations, where people's inability to perceive and control emotions creates conflict and misunderstanding in their professional lives (Landry, 2019). At the workplace, the need for control over one's emotions increased in the 2020th century with the increase of white-collar jobs (Wharton & Erickson, 1993). Here comes the thought, 'Emotional Intelligence (EI)' - a tool to manage emotions with intelligence. According to Mental Health America (2025), it is the ability to control one's emotions while understanding the emotions of surrounding people. With high EI, people can recognize the dimensions of their feelings and identify the sources of others' feelings,

which is vital for creating connections with people. EI enables people to notice and integrate emotions to support cognition, comprehend emotions, and manage emotions to improve personal and professional development (Sharma et al., 2023). Wells (2024) mentioned that firms value emotional intelligence because it exhibits self-awareness, which tends to lead to higher performance. It also improves the company's image, determines the stakeholders' needs, and sometimes rebuilds and repairs damaged connections. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) argued that emotional self-management is critical for workers in the service sector because those who effectively manage their emotions can direct their behaviors and express their emotions to fit their organization's demands. Durra (2023) stated that EI recently drew massive attention in organizational psychology and the human resource management field. Capturing aspects like self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, individuals achieve the capacity to observe, analyze, and command their own and the surrounding people's behavior. Moreover, a higher level of EI is significant for dealing with organizational change, boosting interactive relationships, and reducing stress. This study is an effort to explore the urgency of emotional intelligence in employees' job lives to accomplish their duties and responsibilities uninterruptedly in the organizational work setting.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

In today's fast-paced and dynamic work environments, EI is becoming more widely acknowledged to advance career growth, recruit, and get promotions (Bennett, 2023). Emotional intelligence is one of the top ten most in-demand abilities and will remain so until 2025 (World Economic Forum, 2020). In a survey, 57% of managers say that their highest-performing employees have strong emotional intelligence (LHH, 2019) and it is anticipated that the demand for emotional abilities is expected to increase by 26% by 2030 (Bughin et al., 2018). Low emotional intelligence is a determinant of the high turnover rate of first-line managers (Siddiqui & Hassan, 2013). In contrast, a survey says that employees with bosses with high emotional intelligence were four times less likely to quit (Gandy, 2024). Lower employee engagement, workplace conflicts, and misunderstandings arise due to the lack of EI in leaders because it creates difficulty in managing and expressing emotions and hinders active listening (Landry, 2019). Low EI is a risk factor for mental health, and it has been proven that depressed people lack all aspects of emotional intelligence (Batoool & Khalid, 2009) because it creates more difficulty in handling stress and adapting to change (Ramesar, Koortzen, & Oosthuizen, 2009). Even the annual income of low emotionally intelligent people is lower than that of high emotionally intelligent people (Bradberry, 2022). According to Miller (2023), businesses are losing money due to miscommunication, damaged trust, and low employee engagement created by low emotional intelligence. He stated that 60% of workers feel emotionally distant from their jobs, and almost one in five are unhappy, which has significant financial ramifications. On the other hand, if a company prioritizes emotional intelligence, it is 22 times more likely to have high-performing employees.

In these circumstances, there is a crying need for emotionally intelligent leaders because study results revealed that only a few leaders (only 22% of 155,000 leaders) have strong emotional intelligence (Spencer & Barnfield, 2021). Even with its increasing essentiality, many firms focus only on technical capabilities rather than developing emotional intelligence. This neglect may result in low emotional intelligence, which impacts managers' and employees' performance levels on their job (Jorfi, Jorfi, & Moghadam, 2010). Though emotional intelligence is a growing concern in today's competitive workplace, there is still a lack of detailed comprehension regarding how EI affects organizational outcomes like job satisfaction, employee performance, and productivity. This gap sheds light on the significance of discussing why employees need emotional intelligence and how it relates to achieving organizational goals. It is also necessary to gather insights from present studies on the critical role of emotional intelligence (EI) in the workplace. This study intends to incorporate current research on emotional intelligence in the workplace, identify its main advantages, and look into strategies for fostering its development among employees by conducting a literature review.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study aims to examine the significance of employees' emotional intelligence in the workplace. The specific objectives are to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction, employee performance, and productivity of employees.

4. CONCEPTS

4.1. Emotions

Wierzbicka (1992) defined emotions as unconscious distinctions of incredible delicacy, subtlety, and precision. Three separate elements comprise the complex psychological state of emotions: a subjective experience, a physiological reaction, and a behavioral or expressive reaction (Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2010). Emotion includes neural circuits, neurobiological processes, phenomenal experience or feeling, and perceptual-cognitive processes (Izard, 2010). Ekman (1972) identified fear, disgust, anger, surprise, joy, and sadness as the six primary emotions of humans (Gu, Wang, Patel, Bourgeois, & Huang, 2019). Emotions and moods are included in the individual level of organizational behavior, a field of study that examines the influences of individuals, groups, and structure on organizational behavior (Robbins & Judge, 2014).

4.2. Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is *one kind of social intelligence that involves monitoring one's own and others' feelings and emotions, distinguishing between them, and using this information to guide one's thinking and actions* (Peter Salovey & John D Mayer, 1990). Emotional intelligence is a mixture of skills, including self-motivation and persistence in the face of frustrations, impulse control and delay of gratification, mood regulation, and preventing distress from swamping the ability to think, empathy, and hope (Goleman, 2005). The capacity to recognize, control, and assess emotions is known as emotional intelligence (EI), which can be incorporated into daily life by employing these strategies: thinking before reacting, growing in self-awareness, and demonstrating empathy for others (Cherry, 2020).

4.3. Emotional Intelligence Theory

Salovey and Mayer (1990) first introduced the emotional intelligence theory, which was then popularized by Pîrvu (2020). Mayer and Caruso (2002) revised the emotional intelligence model; later, the trait model of EI was presented by Verma (2023). Emotional intelligence has been conceptualized by three models: the ability model, the mixed model, and the trait model (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019; Pîrvu, 2020). Kanesan and Fauzan (2019) stated ability model as an effective EI model developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990), consisting of four sets of emotion-processing mental abilities: (1) perception, appraisal, and expression of emotion; (2) emotional facilitation of thinking; (3) understanding and analyzing emotions; and (4) reflective regulation of emotions. Goleman (2005) proposed two broad mixed models of emotional intelligence. Bar-On's mixed model of emotional intelligence contains five main dimensions: intrapersonal skills, interpersonal skills, adaptation, stress management, and overall mood. Goleman (2005) divided his approach into four components: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. On the other hand, Petrides (2009) described trait emotional intelligence as fifteen emotion-related characteristics distributed across personality dimensions and aggregated into four factors: well-being, self-control, emotionality, and sociability.

4.4. Emotional Intelligence at the Workplace

Emotional intelligence develops innovative creativity in individuals and, as a result, helps improve people's job performance (Ganji, 2011; Hasanzadeh, 2009). Employees with higher levels of EI perform better (Gong, Chen, & Wang, 2019). It can improve training effectiveness, managerial efficacy, organizational performance, and organizational change attempts (Shahhosseini, Silong, Ismaill, & Uli, 2012). Emotional intelligence also plays a vital

role in leadership; Mayer and Caruso (2002) said that leaders with high EI might be better able to create stronger teams and interact with others more successfully, creating a genuine sense of community inside and outside an organization. Unnikrishnan, Ali, Mariappan, Raghavan, and Thanseer (2019) wrote that EI aims to control emotional activity to improve job performance and maintain composure. They added that EI helps managers identify and address stress in others and lessen their own. Therefore, EI and a job's emotional demands are significantly related to workers' job satisfaction (Wong & Law, 2017).

5. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a systematic approach to gather and analyze existing studies on the impact of Emotional Intelligence in the workplace. Available academic databases such as Google Scholar and The University of Mississippi Libraries were searched using keywords including "Emotional Intelligence," "job satisfaction," "employee performance," "productivity," and "workplace".

Inclusion criteria:

- Focus on Emotional Intelligence in organizational work settings.
- Be published in peer-reviewed journals.
- Be available in English.
- Be published between 2020 and 2025.

Exclusion criteria:

- The articles did not focus on Emotional Intelligence or organizational contexts.
- They were not available in the online version.
- The articles were not available in English.
- The articles were published before 2020.

Relevant papers were found after screening titles and abstracts, and the complete text was examined. Although the primary goal of this study is to explain the importance of emotional intelligence, the data from the chosen articles have been analyzed using conceptual theme analysis. The findings were then compiled into a comprehensive report and analyzed to find patterns and trends across many studies.

5.1. Emotional Intelligence, Job Satisfaction, and Employee Performance

By engaging in emotionally intelligent activities, the human brain gets the training to be conscious of its own and others' emotions, help people to resolve problems, and stay goal-focused (Stoewen, 2024). Emotional intelligence improves a person's job happiness and leads to a happier family life (Pirvu, 2020). Emotional intelligence and job satisfaction have a positive relationship; if a person's emotional intelligence level increases, their job satisfaction level will also increase (Suleman, Syed, Mahmood, & Hussain, 2020). According to García del Castillo-López and Pérez Domínguez (2024), workers with higher emotional intelligence create a more favorable work environment, resulting in higher job satisfaction, consistent with earlier research. Reduced perceived work-related stress is a result of improved emotional intelligence, and this, in turn, leads to increased job satisfaction. They discovered that workers with higher emotional intelligence typically foster a more encouraging and productive workplace, leading to higher levels of job satisfaction. Knezević et al. (2021) demonstrated the significance of emotional intelligence for job happiness and emotional labor for travel agency employees, highlighting the need for managers to raise the emotional intelligence of staff members. They discovered that employees of travel agencies who are conscious of and comprehend their feelings are happier and are less likely to put up a front. Lu, Lee, Yang, and Song (2021) found that emotionally intelligent people can lessen behavioral problems and boost job satisfaction by fostering a healthy work environment and increasing commitment and job satisfaction. Employees are more likely to respond with deep acting to show empathy when they can perceive their clients' emotional demands, which boosts job satisfaction. Emotional intelligence plays a significant role in the workplace and is essential for creating and sustaining productive

connections that increase job satisfaction (Sharma et al., 2023). Durra (2023) used regression analysis to confirm that among HR professionals in the tech sector, emotional intelligence (EI) and job satisfaction have a strong and favorable association. He claimed that by helping people to successfully control their emotions, build strong bonds with coworkers, and negotiate workplace dynamics, emotional intelligence (EI) can increase job satisfaction. Malik, Asma, Iqbal, Khan, and Hussain (2021) discovered that among university academics, job happiness is positively and significantly correlated with all aspects of emotional intelligence (EI), with the exception of social awareness. "Emotion regulation (ER)" was identified as a suppressor variable in their current study. Additionally, they found that emotional intelligence (EI) is the primary predictor of a teacher's effectiveness in a classroom, and that teachers with high emotional intelligence are more satisfied with their jobs than those with low emotional intelligence. Deb, Nafi, Mallik, and Valeri (2023) looked into the role that emotional intelligence (EI) had in mediating the link between small business success and employee work satisfaction. They discovered that people with greater EI levels are happier at work, which improves company performance.

EI is proved significant for improving employee performance, work involvement, and productivity (Gonzales, 2022; Matta & Alam, 2023; Yang, Weng, Li, & Wu, 2022). Employees with high EI perform better and are more likely to have satisfied customers, which benefits the company (Azmy, 2023). The relationship between EI and job performance was validated by Lima, Spahi, and Shala (2022). Higher EI can improve performance at work, according to their quantitative investigation, which is also corroborated by the literature they consulted. They recommended training programs to raise employees' EI levels so they can perform better on the job. Data gathered from Germany, India, and the United States for an exploratory study revealed that the EI dimensions have distinct relationships with aspects of performance and work satisfaction (Schlaegel, Engle, & Lang, 2022). Lu et al. (2021) discovered that emotional self-regulation influences the association between work satisfaction and deep acting in a different study that used samples from South Korea and China. Despite the cultural differences between the two nations, it turned out to be the most important component among other emotional intelligence components. According to Khosravi, Rezvani, and Ashkanasy (2020), Emotional intelligence has a beneficial impact on project performance. In large-scale infrastructure projects, EI is favorably correlated with performance because it is negatively correlated with conflict modes (task, relationship, and process), which are negatively correlated with performance. Understanding and managing emotions among project members improves their capacity to reinforce their team's focus on critical tasks and challenges, increasing project performance and cohesion. EI indirectly mediates the relationship between mindfulness and performance, conveying mindfulness's benefits to workplace performance (Long, An, Dung, & Quy, 2025). It affects both organizational functioning and results relating to individual performance (George, Okon, & Akaighe, 2022). In addition, EI predicts team performance; groups with higher EI showed higher performance than those with lower levels (Michinov & Michinov, 2022).

5.2. Emotional Intelligence and Productivity

Ogbuanya, Okeke, and Maashin (2022) conducted a study on the employees of electrical industries, where EI predicts employee productivity. They discovered that most relational productivity or performance aspects also enhance social effectiveness and correlate with employees' EI levels. The results also corroborated (Murphy, 2014) findings that people in professions like electrical could be more productive if they had strong emotional intelligence. To raise awareness among employees, they recommended holding workshops and seminars on the impact of EI on productivity and workplace stress. Salovey and Mayer (1990) stated that employees will be more emotionally secure if the organization focuses on EI. It allows people to understand and control emotions at work, increasing their performance. They proposed regularly assessing employees' emotional intelligence levels to provide feedback and enhance performance. In another study, the five EI indicators, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social awareness, and social skills, significantly affected teachers' performance (Jay & Dayao, 2021). Harris and Bacchus (2022) surveyed the University of Guyana Library, and the participants pretended to be highly productive there.

Their EI scores were high, which supports the idea that emotional intelligence promotes productivity. Verma (2023) confirmed the positive relationship between EI, socialization, and employee productivity in his study through statistical analysis. The result indicated that EI has a direct impact, and socialization moderately affects Sarhadi, Kaffashan Kakhki, and Behzadi (2021) showed that EI affects productivity with the mediation effect of job motivation (JM). Their results revealed that the impact of EI on productivity, mediated by job feedback (JF), was more significant than its effect mediated by JM because of the librarians' correcting, modifying, and developing their skills after receiving JF. This study showed that knowledge management (KM) and EI, mediated by JM and JF, positively and significantly affected the librarians' productivity.

In another study on emotional intelligence's role in handling software requirement change, Madampe, Hoda, and Grundy (2024) found that EI facilitates achieving individual and team productivity. It can also change (increase or decrease) the level of productivity. Setyaningrum and Maharani (2024) looked into the simultaneous effects of emotional intelligence (EI) on employees' productivity in a manufacturing company. They discovered that EI, professionalism, and compensation all significantly and favorably affect productivity. Highly emotionally intelligent leaders use the strengths of their teams to produce better outcomes and foster an empathetic work environment that encourages team members to share knowledge, which boosts productivity (Pareek, 2024). After applying relationship intelligence, a component of emotional intelligence, team members gained new insights and practices that contributed to increased productivity (Li & Patterson, 2024). Through a comprehensive analysis of 20 scholarly articles (Sharmin, Kalam, Islam, & Aubhi, 2024) explored that EI can affect employee performance and is dominant in organizational success.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings from the reviewed literature identified a significant role of EI in employee job satisfaction. The studies consistently pointed out a highly positive relationship between EI and job satisfaction, which aligns with previous research (Ealias & George, 2012; Kafetsios & Zampetakis, 2008; Sy, Tram, & O'hara, 2006). Moreover, it is explored that employees with high EI show higher job performance, which is supported by previous studies that found emotionally intelligent employees can efficiently control their own and others' emotions, which positively affects their performance (Mossholder, Bedeian, & Armenakis, 1982; Sy et al., 2006; Wong & Law, 2017). The reviewed literature indicated that employees' EI increases productivity. This is consistent with the findings that EI impacts productivity by focusing on intellectual capital in the organization (Singhal, Garg, & Saxena, 2014) and EI is interconnected with productivity (Brooks & Nafukho, 2006). EI is suggested as a tool to enhance employee capability and employee retention and form healthy relationships in the workplace (Ealias & George, 2012). Leaders must improve their EI level to balance resources with existing capabilities to fulfill organizational targets (Singhal et al., 2014). The literature review is limited to the articles published in five years and the secondary sources of information, which presents a narrow view and may create bias.

6.1. Theoretical Implications

The study has significant theoretical implications in the literature on human capital development. It points out the paradigm of change in organizational behavior studies. It emphasizes how important it is to incorporate emotional Intelligence (EI) into current frameworks that mainly emphasize technical and cognitive skills. Additionally, the study offers a theoretical framework for reassessing organizational functions via the perspective of emotional intelligence. This study promotes a holistic approach to employee well-being and managerial efficiency, focusing on workplace relationships' emotional and psychological aspects.

6.2. Practical Implications

This study is essential for the practitioners of human capital development, as it reveals the current need for EI in the workplace. Employers can follow this study to create thorough emotional intelligence (EI) training programs that enhance workers' social and emotional skills. These courses can be included in routine professional development programs, giving all staff members—from entry-level workers to senior executives—the tools they need to effectively communicate, control their emotions, and forge lasting bonds with one another. By developing an emotionally intelligent workforce, organizations should expect higher overall productivity, higher employee satisfaction and retention rates, and enhanced teamwork. Therefore, this research provides a roadmap for creating a more resilient and adaptive organizational culture that can effectively navigate the difficulties and complexities of modern work environments.

7. CONCLUSION

EI enables people to interpret emotional behavior and apply it to reasoning and other cognitive tasks (Madampe et al. 2024). Qualities associated with EI, such as resilience, curiosity, lifelong learning, motivation, and self-awareness, are highly prized by businesses and will continue to be so for the next few years (World Economic Forum, 2020). This study aims to highlight the necessity of incorporating emotional Intelligence (EI) into the fundamental outputs recognized and fostered in the workplace, highlighting its critical role in the overall growth of workers and the general well-being of the company. It explained the benefits of emotional intelligence in employees' work lives. After reviewing the current literature, this paper found that emotional intelligence is significant for career advancement, improved performance, better job satisfaction, recognizing others' emotions, effective leadership, and improved communication skills. This paper also justified that emotional intelligence and improved performance of employees have a positive relationship; emotionally intelligent people execute tasks better than others. Employees should receive training from the company to develop their emotional intelligence. This skill may be acquired at any age and stage of life; it is not a natural trait (Selvaranee & Rajan, 2023). Organizations can arrange employee training sessions to improve emotional intelligence and maximize productivity and profitability. Future research can be done quantitatively to measure the exact impact of emotional intelligence on the key predictors of organizational success with a large sample size. It is imperative to investigate how much EI impacts performance, job satisfaction, and productivity to determine the present level of EI in the workplace. Organizations can achieve sustainable success by recognizing and addressing the significance of EI and fostering more harmonious and productive work cultures.

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